

List of languages by number of native speakers

This article ranks human languages by their number of native speakers.

However, all such rankings should be used with caution, because it is not possible to devise a coherent set of linguistic criteria for distinguishing languages in a dialect continuum.^[1] For example, a language is often defined as a set of varieties that are mutually intelligible, but independent national standard languages may be considered to be separate languages even though they are largely mutually intelligible, as in the case of Danish and Norwegian.^[2]

Conversely, many commonly accepted languages, including German, Italian and even English, encompass varieties that are not mutually intelligible.^[1] While Arabic is sometimes considered a single language centred on Modern Standard Arabic, other authors describe its mutually unintelligible varieties as separate languages.^[3] Similarly, Chinese is sometimes viewed as a single language because of a shared culture and common literary language.^[4] It is also common to describe various Chinese dialect groups, such as Mandarin, Wu and Yue, as languages, even though each of these groups contains many mutually unintelligible varieties.^[5]

There are also difficulties in obtaining reliable counts of speakers, which vary over time because of population change and language shift. In some areas, there is no reliable census data, the data is not current, or the census may not record languages spoken, or record them ambiguously. Sometimes speaker populations are exaggerated for political reasons, or speakers of minority languages may be under-reported in favour of a national language.^[6]



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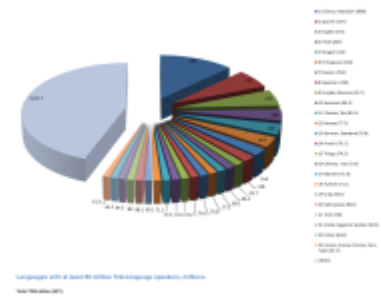
References

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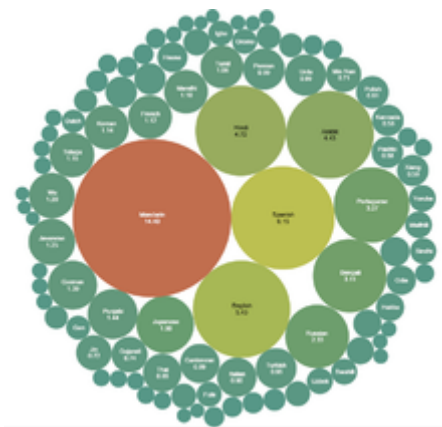
Top languages by population

Ethnologue (2019, 22nd edition)

The following languages are listed as having at least 10 million first language speakers in the 2019 edition of *Ethnologue*, a language reference published by SIL International.^[9]



Languages with at least 50 million first-language speakers, millions (according to: Ethnologue)^[7]



Bubble chart of languages by proportion of native speakers worldwide^[8]

Languages with at least 10 million first-language speakers^[9]

Rank	Language	Speakers (millions)	Percentage of world pop. (March 2019) ^[10]	Language family	Branch
1	<u>Mandarin Chinese</u>	918	11.922%	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>
2	<u>Spanish</u>	480	5.994%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Romance</u>
3	<u>English</u>	379	4.922%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Germanic</u>
4	<u>Hindi (sanskritised Hindustani)^[11]</u>	341	4.429%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
5	<u>Bengali</u>	300	4.000%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
6	<u>Portuguese</u>	221	2.870%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Romance</u>
7	<u>Russian</u>	154	2.000%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Balto-Slavic</u>
8	<u>Japanese</u>	128	1.662%	<u>Japonic</u>	<u>Japanese</u>
9	<u>Western Punjabi^[12]</u>	92.7	1.204%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
10	<u>Marathi</u>	83.1	1.079%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
11	<u>Telugu</u>	82.0	1.065%	<u>Dravidian</u>	<u>South-Central</u>
12	<u>Wu Chinese</u>	81.4	1.057%	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>
13	<u>Turkish</u>	79.4	1.031%	<u>Turkic</u>	<u>Oghuz</u>
14	<u>Korean</u>	77.3	1.004%	<u>Koreanic</u>	<u>language isolate</u>
15	<u>French</u>	77.2	1.003%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Romance</u>
16	<u>German (only Standard German)</u>	76.1	0.988%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Germanic</u>
17	<u>Vietnamese</u>	76.0	0.987%	<u>Austroasiatic</u>	<u>Vietic</u>
18	<u>Tamil</u>	75.0	0.974%	<u>Dravidian</u>	<u>South</u>
19	<u>Yue Chinese</u>	73.1	0.949%	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>
20	<u>Urdu (Persianised Hindustani)^[11]</u>	68.6	0.891%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
21	<u>Javanese</u>	68.3	0.887%	<u>Austronesian</u>	<u>Malayo-Polynesian</u>
22	<u>Italian</u>	64.8	0.842%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Romance</u>
23	<u>Egyptian Arabic</u>	64.6	0.839%	<u>Afroasiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>
24	<u>Gujarati</u>	56.4	0.732%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
25	<u>Iranian Persian</u>	52.8	0.686%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Iranian</u>
26	<u>Bhojpuri</u>	52.2	0.678%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
27	<u>Southern Min</u>	50.1	0.651%	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>
28	<u>Hakka</u>	48.2	0.626%	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>
29	<u>Jin Chinese</u>	46.9	0.609%	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>
30	<u>Hausa</u>	43.9	0.570%	<u>Afroasiatic</u>	<u>Chadic</u>
31	<u>Kannada</u>	43.6	0.566%	<u>Dravidian</u>	<u>South</u>
32	<u>Indonesian</u>	43.4 ^[a]	0.564%	<u>Austronesian</u>	<u>Malayo-Polynesian</u>
33	<u>Polish</u>	39.7	0.516%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Balto-Slavic</u>

34	<u>Yoruba</u>	37.8	0.491%	<u>Niger–Congo</u>	<u>Volta–Niger</u>
35	<u>Xiang Chinese</u>	37.3	0.484%	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>
36	<u>Malayalam</u>	37.1	0.482%	<u>Dravidian</u>	<u>South</u>
37	<u>Odia</u>	34.5	0.448%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
38	<u>Maithili</u>	33.9	0.440%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
39	<u>Burmese</u>	32.9	0.427%	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Lolo-Burmese</u>
40	<u>Eastern Punjabi</u> ^[12]	32.6	0.423%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
41	<u>Sunda</u>	32.4	0.421%	<u>Austronesian</u>	<u>Malayo-Polynesian</u>
42	<u>Sudanese Arabic</u>	31.9	0.414%	<u>Afroasiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>
43	<u>Algerian Arabic</u>	29.4	0.382%	<u>Afroasiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>
44	<u>Moroccan Arabic</u>	27.5	0.357%	<u>Afroasiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>
45	<u>Ukrainian</u>	27.3	0.355%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Balto-Slavic</u>
46	<u>Igbo</u>	27.0	0.351%	<u>Niger–Congo</u>	<u>Volta–Niger</u>
47	<u>Northern Uzbek</u>	25.1	0.326%	<u>Turkic</u>	<u>Karluk</u>
48	<u>Sindhi</u>	24.6	0.319%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
49	<u>North Levantine Arabic</u>	24.6	0.319%	<u>Afroasiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>
50	<u>Romanian</u>	24.3	0.316%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Romance</u>
51	<u>Tagalog</u>	23.6	0.306%	<u>Austronesian</u>	<u>Malayo-Polynesian</u>
52	<u>Dutch</u>	23.1	0.300%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Germanic</u>
53	<u>Sa`idi Arabic</u>	22.4	0.291%	<u>Afroasiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>
54	<u>Gan Chinese</u>	22.1	0.287%	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>
55	<u>Amharic</u>	21.9	0.284%	<u>Afroasiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>
56	<u>Northern Pashto</u>	20.9	0.271%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Iranian</u>
57	<u>Magahi</u>	20.7	0.269%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
58	<u>Thai</u>	20.7	0.269%	<u>Kra–Dai</u>	<u>Tai</u>
59	<u>Saraiki</u>	20.0	0.260%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
60	<u>Khmer</u>	16.6	0.216%	<u>Austroasiatic</u>	<u>Khmer</u>
61	<u>Chhattisgarhi</u>	16.3	0.212%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
62	<u>Somali</u>	16.2	0.210%	<u>Afroasiatic</u>	<u>Cushitic</u>
63	<u>Malaysian (Malaysian Malay)</u>	16.1	0.209%	<u>Austronesian</u>	<u>Malayo-Polynesian</u>
64	<u>Cebuano</u>	15.9	0.206%	<u>Austronesian</u>	<u>Malayo-Polynesian</u>
65	<u>Nepali</u>	15.8	0.205%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
66	<u>Mesopotamian Arabic</u>	15.7	0.204%	<u>Afroasiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>
67	<u>Assamese</u>	15.3	0.199%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
68	<u>Sinhalese</u>	15.3	0.199%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
69	<u>Northern Kurdish</u>	14.6	0.190%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Iranian</u>
70	<u>Hejazi Arabic</u>	14.5	0.188%	<u>Afroasiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>
71	<u>Nigerian Fulfulde</u>	14.5	0.188%	<u>Niger–Congo</u>	<u>Senegambian</u>

72	<u>Bavarian</u>	14.1	0.183%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Germanic</u>
73	<u>South Azerbaijani</u>	13.8	0.179%	<u>Turkic</u>	<u>Oghuz</u>
74	<u>Greek</u>	13.1	0.170%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Hellenic</u>
75	<u>Chittagonian</u>	13.0	0.169%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
76	<u>Kazakh</u>	12.9	0.168%	<u>Turkic</u>	<u>Kipchak</u>
77	<u>Deccan</u>	12.8	0.166%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>
78	<u>Hungarian</u>	12.6	0.164%	<u>Uralic</u>	<u>Finno-Ugric</u>
79	<u>Kinyarwanda</u>	12.1	0.157%	<u>Niger–Congo</u>	<u>Bantu</u>
80	<u>Zulu</u>	12.1	0.157%	<u>Niger–Congo</u>	<u>Bantu</u>
81	<u>South Levantine Arabic</u>	11.6	0.151%	<u>Afroasiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>
82	<u>Tunisian Arabic</u>	11.6	0.151%	<u>Afroasiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>
83	<u>Sanaani Spoken Arabic</u>	11.4	0.148%	<u>Afroasiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>
84	<u>Northern Min</u>	11.0	0.143%	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>
85	<u>Southern Pashto</u>	10.9	0.142%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Iranian</u>
86	<u>Rundi</u>	10.8	0.140%	<u>Niger–Congo</u>	<u>Bantu</u>
87	<u>Czech</u>	10.7	0.139%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Balto-Slavic</u>
88	<u>Ta'izzi-Adeni Arabic</u>	10.5	0.136%	<u>Afroasiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>
89	<u>Uyghur</u>	10.4	0.135%	<u>Turkic</u>	<u>Karluk</u>
90	<u>Eastern Min</u>	10.3	0.134%	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>
91	<u>Sylheti</u>	10.3	0.134%	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>

Nationalencyklopedin (2010)

The following table contains the top 100 languages by estimated number of native speakers in the 2007 edition of the Swedish encyclopedia *Nationalencyklopedin*. As census methods in different countries vary to a considerable extent, and given that some countries do not record language in their censuses, any list of languages by native speakers, or total speakers, is effectively based on estimates. Updated estimates from 2010 are also provided.^[8]

The top eleven languages have additional figures from the 2010 edition of the *Nationalencyklopedin*. Numbers above 95 million are rounded off to the nearest 5 million.

Top languages by population per *Nationalencyklopedin*

Rank	Language	Native speakers in millions 2007 (2010)	Percentage of world population (2007)
1	<u>Mandarin</u> (entire branch)	935 (955)	14.1%
2	<u>Spanish</u>	390 (405)	5.85%
3	<u>English</u>	365 (360)	5.52%
4	<u>Hindi</u> ^[b]	295 (310)	4.46%
5	<u>Arabic</u>	280 (295)	4.23%
6	<u>Portuguese</u>	205 (215)	3.08%
7	<u>Bengali</u>	200 (205)	3.05%
8	<u>Russian</u>	160 (155)	2.42%
9	<u>Japanese</u>	125 (125)	1.92%
10	<u>Punjabi</u>	95 (100)	1.44%
11	<u>German</u>	92 (95)	1.39%
12	<u>Javanese</u>	82	1.25%
13	<u>Wu</u> (inc. <u>Shanghainese</u>)	80	1.20%
14	<u>Malay</u> (inc. <u>Indonesian</u> and <u>Malaysian</u>)	77 ^[a]	1.16%
15	<u>Telugu</u>	76	1.15%
16	<u>Vietnamese</u>	76	1.14%
17	<u>Korean</u>	76	1.14%
18	<u>French</u>	75	1.12%
19	<u>Marathi</u>	73	1.10%
20	<u>Tamil</u>	70	1.06%
21	<u>Urdu</u>	66	0.99%
22	<u>Turkish</u>	63	0.95%
23	<u>Italian</u>	59	0.90%
24	<u>Yue</u> (inc. <u>Cantonese</u>)	59	0.89%
25	<u>Thai</u>	56	0.85%
26	<u>Gujarati</u>	49	0.74%
27	<u>Jin</u>	48	0.72%
28	<u>Southern Min</u> (inc. <u>Hokkien</u> and <u>Teochew</u>)	47	0.71%
29	<u>Persian</u>	45	0.68%
30	<u>Polish</u>	40	0.61%
31	<u>Pashto</u>	39	0.58%
32	<u>Kannada</u>	38	0.58%
33	<u>Xiang</u>	38	0.58%
34	<u>Malayalam</u>	38	0.57%

35	<u>Sundanese</u>	38	0.57%
36	<u>Hausa</u>	34	0.52%
37	<u>Odia (Oriya)</u>	33	0.50%
38	<u>Burmese</u>	33	0.50%
39	<u>Hakka</u>	31	0.46%
40	<u>Ukrainian</u>	30	0.46%
41	<u>Bhojpuri</u>	29 ^[c]	0.43%
42	<u>Tagalog (Filipino)</u>	28	0.42%
43	<u>Yoruba</u>	28	0.42%
44	<u>Maithili</u>	27 ^[c]	0.41%
45	<u>Uzbek</u>	26	0.39%
46	<u>Sindhi</u>	26	0.39%
47	<u>Amharic</u>	25	0.37%
48	<u>Fula</u>	24	0.37%
49	<u>Romanian</u>	24	0.37%
50	<u>Oromo</u>	24	0.36%
51	<u>Igbo</u>	24	0.36%
52	<u>Azerbaijani</u>	23	0.34%
53	<u>Awadhi</u>	22 ^[c]	0.33%
54	<u>Gan</u>	22	0.33%
55	<u>Cebuano (Visayan)</u>	21	0.32%
56	<u>Dutch</u>	21	0.32%
57	<u>Kurdish</u>	21	0.31%
58	<u>Serbo-Croatian</u>	19	0.28%
59	<u>Malagasy</u>	18	0.28%
60	<u>Saraiki</u>	17 ^[d]	0.26%
61	<u>Nepali</u>	17	0.25%
62	<u>Sinhala</u>	16	0.25%
63	<u>Chittagonian</u>	16	0.24%
64	<u>Zhuang</u>	16	0.24%
65	<u>Khmer</u>	16	0.24%
66	<u>Turkmen</u>	16	0.24%
67	<u>Assamese</u>	15	0.23%
68	<u>Madurese</u>	15	0.23%
69	<u>Somali</u>	15	0.22%
70	<u>Marwari</u>	14 ^[c]	0.21%
71	<u>Magahi</u>	14 ^[c]	0.21%
72	<u>Haryanvi</u>	14 ^[c]	0.21%

73	<u>Hungarian</u>	13	0.19%
74	<u>Chhattisgarhi</u>	12 ^[c]	0.19%
75	<u>Greek</u>	12	0.18%
76	<u>Chewa</u>	12	0.17%
77	<u>Deccan</u>	11	0.17%
78	<u>Akan</u>	11	0.17%
79	<u>Kazakh</u>	11	0.17%
80	<u>Northern Min</u>	10.9	0.16%
81	<u>Sylheti</u>	10.7	0.16%
82	<u>Zulu</u>	10.4	0.16%
83	<u>Czech</u>	10.0	0.15%
84	<u>Kinyarwanda</u>	9.8	0.15%
85	<u>Dhundhari</u>	9.6 ^[c]	0.15%
86	<u>Haitian Creole</u>	9.6	0.15%
87	<u>Eastern Min</u> (inc. <u>Fuzhou dialect</u>)	9.5	0.14%
88	<u>Ilocano</u>	9.1	0.14%
89	<u>Quechua</u>	8.9	0.13%
90	<u>Kirundi</u>	8.8	0.13%
91	<u>Swedish</u>	8.7	0.13%
92	<u>Hmong</u>	8.4	0.13%
93	<u>Shona</u>	8.3	0.13%
94	<u>Uyghur</u>	8.2	0.12%
95	<u>Hiligaynon/Ilonggo</u> (Visayan)	8.2	0.12%
96	<u>Mossi</u>	7.6	0.11%
97	<u>Xhosa</u>	7.6	0.11%
98	<u>Belarusian</u>	7.6 ^[e]	0.11%
99	<u>Balochi</u>	7.6	0.11%
100	<u>Konkani</u>	7.4	0.11%
Total		5,610	85%

CIA, 2018

According to the CIA, the most-spoken first languages in 2018 were:^[15]

Top first languages by population per
CIA^[15]

Rank	Language	Percentage of world population (2018)
1	<u>Mandarin Chinese</u>	12.3%
2	<u>Spanish</u>	6.0%
3	<u>English</u>	5.1%
3	<u>Arabic</u>	5.1%
5	<u>Hindi</u>	3.5%
6	<u>Bengali</u>	3.3%
7	<u>Portuguese</u>	3.0%
8	<u>Russian</u>	2.1%
9	<u>Japanese</u>	1.7%
10	<u>Western Punjabi</u>	1.3%
11	<u>Javanese</u>	1.1%

See also

- Global language system
- Languages of Africa
- Languages used on the Internet
- Linguistic demography
- Linguistic diversity index
- List of ISO 639-3 codes
- List of languages by number of native speakers in India (uses a different definition of Hindi)
- List of languages by the number of countries in which they are recognized as an official language
- List of languages by total number of speakers
- List of sign languages by number of native signers
- Lists of languages
- Number of languages by country
- World language

Notes

- a. Some have argued this number should be much higher, estimating between 215 and 268 million due to relative greater competence of speakers in the Indonesian language as compared with the language Ethnologue, perhaps wrongly, defines as being their first language (e.g., Javanese, Minangkabau, Bugis, etc.)^[13]
- b. Refers to only *Modern Standard Hindi* here. The Census of India defines Hindi on a loose and broad basis. It does not include the entire Hindustani language, only the Hindi register of it. In addition to Standard Hindi, it incorporates a set of other Indo-Aryan languages written in Devanagari script including Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Haryanvi, Dhundhari etc. under Hindi

group which have more than 422 million native speakers as of 2001.^[14] However, the census also acknowledges Standard Hindi, the above mentioned languages and others as separate mother tongues of the Hindi language and provides individual figures for all these languages.^[14]

- c. This is only a fraction of total speakers; others are counted under "Hindi" as they regard their language a Hindi dialect.
- d. Numbers may also be counted in Punjabi above
- e. Only half this many use Belarusian as their home language.

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External links

- The Ethnologue's most recent list of languages by total number of speakers (<https://www.ethnologue.com/guides/ethnologue200>) – this is not a list of native speakers
 - Languages Spoken by More Than 10 Million People (https://encarta.msn.com/media_701500404/Languages_Spoken_by_More_Than_10_Million_People.html) (Archived (<https://www.webcitation.org/query?id=1257013011437361>) 2009-10-31) – Encarta list, based on data from Ethnologue, but some figures (e.g. for Arabic) widely vary from it
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